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HOUSE JOINT MEMORIAL 2

48TH LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - SECOND SESSION, 2008

INTRODUCED BY

John Pena

FOR THE INDIAN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

A JOINT MEMORIAL

REQUESTING STATE AGENCIES TO STUDY THE NECESSITY FOR AND
FEASIBILITY OF ESTABLISHING A STATE SUPERFUND PROGRAM FOR THE
CLEANUP OF URANIUM-CONTAMINATED SITES IN NEW MEXICO.

WHEREAS, beginning in the 1950s and 1960s, private
companies began extensive exploration, mining and milling
activities related to the uranium deposits located in the
Grants mineral belt in northwestern New Mexico on private,
state, federal and tribal lands; and

WHEREAS, these activities continued through the 1990s,
resulting in the mining and milling in excess of one hundred
seventy-five thousand tons of uranium ore from lands located in
New Mexico; and

WHEREAS, hundreds of abandoned, unremediated uranium mines
exist in communities in northwestern New Mexico, and scores of
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1 Native American and non-Native American families still live in
2 close proximity to those abandoned, unremediated mine sites;
3 and

4 WHEREAS, unremediated contamination resulting from past
5 uranium exploration, mining and milling activities constitutes
6 a continuing threat to the health and well-being of residents
7 of northwestern New Mexico; and

8 WHEREAS, state and federal studies have repeatedly shown
9 that surface water, ground water and soils were and remain
10 irreversibly contaminated by past uranium mining and milling
11 activities and that livestock that grazed in the mining areas
12 were found to have hazardous levels of radioactive materials in
13 their edible organs and muscle; and

14 WHEREAS, contamination from the northeast Church Rock
15 uranium mine site abandoned in 1979 was left unremediated for
16 more than twenty years before the United States environmental
17 protection agency commenced cleanup activities in 2007; and

18 WHEREAS, other sites in New Mexico that pose a threat to
19 the health and well-being of New Mexicans and that should be
20 remediated are unlikely to be remediated through the United
21 States environmental protection agency "superfund" program
22 because they rank too low on the priority scale in comparison
23 to other superfund sites throughout the country, in part
24 because the number of persons affected by the New Mexico sites
25 is relatively small;

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